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## Viewing cable 08BOGOTA337, CJCS ADMIRAL MULLEN'S JANUARY 17 MEETING WITH

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08BOGOTA337**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BOGOTA337	2008-01-28 17:05	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Bogota

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/wikileaks/articulo-288238-desconfianza-chavez>

VZCZCXYZ0001  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0337/01 0281705  
ZNY SSSS ZZH  
P 281705Z JAN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1118  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 0512  
RUEHBE/AMEMBASSY BELMOPAN PRIORITY 0053  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8006  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 2122  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 9849  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN 9199  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5846  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 2134  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 8270  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 2930  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0387  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1138  
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY 4734  
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY 1864  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2374  
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY 1471  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4279  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0168  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP ADMIN/CHAIRS// PRIORITY

S E C R E T BOGOTA 000337

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARK](#) [MOPS](#) [VZ](#) [AR](#) [BH](#) [BR](#) [CI](#) [CS](#)  
CU, ES, HO, MX, NU, PM, PA, PE, UY, CO  
SUBJECT: CJCS ADMIRAL MULLEN'S JANUARY 17 MEETING WITH  
PRESIDENT URIBE

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield  
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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**¶1.** (S) President Uribe's overwhelming concern during a January 17 meeting with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Admiral Michael Mullen, was Hugo Chavez' aggressive remarks and proposal to grant belligerent status to the FARC. Uribe insisted the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) must keep their terrorist designation, and the USG and GOC should work together to convince Latin American countries that Chavez' approach would harm Colombia and regional democracy. Uribe said Chavez has committed to bring down Uribe and his government by using the FARC as his militia inside Colombia. The GOC's current plan of action on hostages consists of locating them, securing areas near the hostage groups, and calling on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to negotiate their release. Uribe would authorize Colombian forces to cross into Venezuela to arrest FARC leaders and bring them to justice in Colombia. End Summary.

**¶2.** (U) Participants

UNITED STATES

CJCS Admiral Michael Mullen  
Ambassador William Brownfield  
CJCS/EA CAPT James Foggo  
Defense Attach COL Mark Wilkins (notetaker)

COLOMBIA

President Alvaro Uribe  
Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos  
Armed Forces Commander General Freddy Padilla

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Uribe Obsessed By Chavez Blasts  
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13. (C) President Alvaro Uribe arrived late to the meeting, directly from a discussion with his cabinet on how to respond to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez' latest inflammatory remarks, and the show of solidarity by the Venezuelan Congress on granting "belligerent" status to the FARC. It was clear that he was still focused on Chavez and the GOC response.

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GOC Progress, USG Support  
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14. (C) Uribe thanked the United States for its continued support, stressing its decisiveness in helping Colombia pull back from the brink of becoming a failed state. While much work remains, Colombia has made great progress against terrorists and the GOC feels certain they can win this battle. Uribe attributed a great portion of the credit for Colombia's success to the permanent assistance of the USG and

its armed forces. Chairman Mullen reaffirmed the strength of the bilateral relationship and assured Uribe of continuing USG commitment to defeating our common adversaries. He admired Colombians' determination and leadership. The Colombian military had transformed itself remarkably and performed the highest calling possible -- returning Colombia to its citizens.

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Chavez' Endorsement of FARC  
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15. (C) Turning to Venezuela, Uribe said his neighbor's actions cause Colombia great difficulty. The FARC and ELN must keep their terrorist designation, Uribe insisted, and there should be negative consequences for any country granting them belligerent status. It was important to counter and challenge Chavez' rhetoric, especially on this point. When France and Mexico granted that status to the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) rebels in El Salvador in 1981, Uribe commented, they fought an unelected and brutal dictatorship. By contrast, the FARC waged war on a duly elected democracy, they had no public support, and they financed themselves through narcotrafficking and extortion.

16. (S) Asked by the Chairman how much help Chavez gave the FARC, Uribe replied that Chavez has a five to seven year plan to advance his Bolivarian agenda in Colombia. He has created popular militias inside Venezuela (apart from the Armed Forces) to sustain his revolution. The GOC believes Chavez thinks he could use the FARC as his militia inside Colombia to combat its democratic government. Chavez remains committed to bring down both Uribe and his government, as the primary obstacles to his Bolivarian expansionist dreams. With no clear Colombian presidential successor, a well financed candidate favoring Chavez might find space in 2010. The best counter to Chavez, in Uribe's view, remains action -- including use of the military.

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Regional Support  
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17. (S) Uribe urged the GOC and USG to work together to convince Latin American countries that Chavez' approach to the FARC was wrong and would harm Colombia and regional democracy. The USG, he said, ought to lead a public campaign against Venezuela and counter Chavez' progress through preferential oil offers. The U.S. and Mexico, supported by Honduras, Panama, Belize, and Costa Rica (especially Oscar Arias in the latter) were natural leaders to counter Chavez. Even Cuba, which felt Chavez had crossed into dangerous territory, has exercised a restraining influence. When the GOC asked the Cuban government their views on Chavez' call to roll back the FARC's terrorist designation, the Cubans stated that it was "a difficult proposal."

18. (S) Uribe saw mixed loyalties among other Latin American countries. Only Nicaragua had supported Chavez' FARC proposal. Argentina remains c

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Hostages and HVTs  
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19. (S) Uribe listed rescue of hostages held by the FARC as one of his main goals for 2008. He outlined a plan whereby the military would establish a "cordon sanitaire" around areas where hostages were held. Then the GOC would temporarily open the area to outside interlocutors such as the ICRC to offer an international medical mission and conduct negotiations. Under this umbrella, the GOC would focus on the 44 hostages the FARC had identified as "exchangeable." Chairman Mullen assured USG support for GOC's efforts, but he cautioned that the USG wanted the hostages returned alive. Uribe responded with his conviction that the FARC would not kill hostages at this stage. The best course of action, he advocated, remains to locate the hostages, secure the positions, and then call in the ICRC to negotiate their release.

110. (S) Uribe said the GOC also placed a priority on high value targets and that they had achieved great results in late 2007. Finally, he said he was prepared to authorize Colombian forces to cross into Venezuela, arrest FARC leaders, and bring them to justice in Colombia.

111. (U) CJCS Admiral Mullen cleared this cable.